PROGRESSING NATIONAL SDG IMPLEMENTATION REPORT 2023

II. POLICIES FOR 2030 AGENDA IMPLEMENTATION

Chapter 3: Incorporation of the 2030 Agenda into National Frameworks and Policies
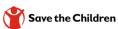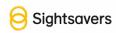

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Chapter 3: Incorporation of the 2030 Agenda into National Frameworks and Policies

This chapter provides an overview of how countries report on their progress towards greater synergies between 2030 Agenda planning and policy integration, implementation and review. The chapter is organized around three sections addressing the following three assessment pillars:

1.
Whether the SDGs have been incorporated in national frameworks and policies;

2.
Approaches to implementing policy coherence for sustainable development; and

3.
Integration of diverse multilateral agreements and global policy frameworks

As is the case for other VNR sections, a glaring gap across most reports is the lack of reflection on how far countries have come since the first VNR, especially considering that the 2023 VNRs were undertaken at the half-way point of 2030 Agenda implementation.

1. Mainstreaming the 2030 Agenda within national policy frameworks

Nearly all reporting countries and the EU (except for Liechtenstein and Timor-Leste) state that they have incorporated the SDGs in their national planning processes through dedicated strategies and/or policy frameworks. However, countries seldomly provide details on the process through which SDG mainstreaming took place, as well as how policy coordination and coherence is ensured between ministries and the levels of the administration when implementing national plans. As the CSO View from Ireland suggests, effective and transparent accountability frameworks to foster policy coherence still seem elusive to governments.

The specific approaches for placing the SDGs at the core of national planning tools vary considerably across countries. For example, each strategic goal under **Lithuania's** overarching national development strategy, adopted in 2020, "contributes to at least two of the SDGs" and has thus become "the real basis for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Lithuania." Describing its Vision and Development Strategy of the Slovak Republic until 2030 as "the executive document" of the SDGs, **Slovakia's** VNR report mentions a "highly democratic" strategic planning process to integrate the SDGs into six national priorities. The VNR report describes this integration as being more than "just a simple grouping of the SDGs [as...] each national priority contains national elements and at the same time, some of the SDGs are incorporated in several of the six national priorities."

Canada reports that its fifth Federal Sustainable Development Strategy for 2022–2026 is "the first to be organized around the 17 SDGs." **Chile** and **France** note the strong alignment between national and local-level SDG planning, with **Chile** underscoring its focus on "territorialization of the 2030 Agenda as a strategy for the appropriation and strengthening of local alliances." While it initially states that it has no overarching SDG policy framework, **Liechtenstein** mentions that since 2022, the government has committed itself "to subject all new draft legislation and international treaties to an SDG analysis. The SDGs are thus a fixed component of all consultation reports as well as government reports and motions submitted to the Parliament."

Many countries also provide detailed quantitative data on alignment between the SDGs and their national development plans. **Fiji** highlights that 88 indicators in its current national development plan were aligned with the SDGs, and further alignment is expected in the upcoming plan. **Viet Nam's** National Action Plan 2030 covers 115 targets and 158 indicators across all 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

CSO View: Integrating SDG indicators within the National Development Plan in Mongolia

Mongolia cites a joint study with the UN Development Programme that concluded that the country "had aligned the SDGs well with the long-term development policy's goals and targets but not their indicators," with 116 of the 169 SDG targets found to be "fully aligned with Vision 2050."

According to the Mongolian CSO Network on the SDGs, the national long-term development plan Vision 2050 is indeed only aligned at goal and target level with the SDGs. In the latter part of 2019, the government established around 9 multi stakeholder Working Groups (including CSO representatives) in different ministries, in order to develop a framework of national targets and indicators for the SDGs. The process was completed and a workshop was organized to get feedback and complete a proposal for a set of national SDG targets and indicators. That said, the proposal that resulted from this consultation process is yet to be approved by Parliament.

Based on information accessed by the Mongolian CSO Network, the Ministry of Economy and Development is looking to embed these national indicators and targets within the six 10-year programs that will guide the implementation of the national development plan 'Vision 2050', and submit them to the Parliament for approval in the spring session of 2024.

Source: Adapted from email exchanges with the Mongolian CSO Network on the SDGs

2. How countries interpret policy coherence for sustainable development

BOX: What is Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD)?

SDG Target 17.14 specifically calls on all countries to enhance PCSD. This encompasses: addressing the three pillars of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) in a balanced and integrated manner; and aligning policies across different sectors and levels of government. Another element of PCSD relates to monitoring and addressing the impacts of domestic policy internationally. SDG indicator 17.14.1 measures countries' progress on PCSD along the following eight domains: institutionalization of political commitment; long-term considerations in decision-making; inter-ministerial and cross-sectoral coordination; participatory processes; policy linkages; alignment across government levels; monitoring and reporting for policy coherence; and financing for policy coherence.

To support PCSD at the national level, the Council of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) adopted its revised Recommendation on Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development in 2019 to respond to the "universal commitments" of the 2030 Agenda, while leaving no one behind. The Recommendation is organized under three main pillars:

- A strategic vision for implementing the 2030 Agenda underpinned by a clear political commitment and leadership to enhance PCSD;
- Effective and inclusive institutional and governance mechanisms to address

policy interactions across sectors and align actions between levels of government; and

- A set of responsive and adaptive tools to anticipate, assess and address domestic, transboundary and long-term impacts of policies.

Recent CSO analyses provide additional insights for a nuanced understanding of PCSD. Against a backdrop of intersecting global crises, the Policy Coherence Index developed by the Spanish NGO Platform La Coordinadora identifies four essential transformations around which PCSD can be organized: democratic, feminist, socioeconomic and ecological. Another study by the French NGO Platform Coordination Sud focuses on four "international spillover effects" that provide a locus for more coherent and equitable international development partnerships.

While many VNR reports affirm that policy coherence is one of the principles that underpin SDG policy making, no single country provides a comprehensive assessment of progress along all the eight OECD principles (see box). Instead, various examples of PCSD are highlighted. **France's** VNR adopts the term "ecological transition" to encompass a broad range of sustainability actions, including climate change mitigation and adaptation, energy efficiency, the circular economy and just transitions. **Portugal** and **Saudi Arabia** highlight institutional innovations for policy coherence. **Portugal** notes the recent launch of PlanAPP33, which is coordinated at the inter-ministerial level, as an example of "an institutional response that promotes cooperation and coordination between policy areas." In the same vein, **Saudi Arabia** describes the establishment of an overarching Sustainable Development Steering Committee in September 2021, as an example of a policy coherence approach that acknowledges the interconnected nature of SDGs and indicates that "sustainability has become central to policy development."

Timor-Leste highlights the role of strengthening data and monitoring systems to help improve SDG policy coherence and environment. This includes ensuring the availability of reliable, timely data for decision makers and citizens. **Belgium** reflects on some accompanying institutional and governance challenges, notably the limitations posed by its federal structure to integrated SDG policy setting and implementation. **Iceland** makes an explicit link between policy coherence and trade policy, citing its participation in the European Free Trade Association, which seeks, among other objectives, to harness the potential for international trade to contribute to the promotion of sustainable development.

Several European countries also highlight synergies with EU-level frameworks and SDG targets, such as the EU Green Deal. The EU's own report characterizes its PCSD approach as "largely consistent with the focus on a short set of entry points for transformation recommended by scientists in the UN Global Sustainable Development Report."

Implementing the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs holistically and coherently constitutes a challenge.
[Voluntary National Review, Belgium]

Introducing its National Implementation Plan for the Sustainable Development Goals 2022-2024, **Ireland** *notes one of the strategic objectives is to "embed the SDG framework into the work of Government Departments to achieve greater Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development."*

According to Coalition 2030, while positive strides are being made in cohesive policy-making, providing a clear list of specific indicators to be assessed under the policies linked to the Second Implementation Plan would greatly enhance accountability. The current status of accountability mechanisms for ensuring the implementation of actions outlined in various policies and policy frameworks remains unclear and it is not evident if Principal Officers (POs) for each Unit in each Department are actively coordinating in the course of policy development.

Presently, the SDG Unit in charge of coordinating implementation efforts lacks a discernible mechanism to hold departments accountable for the policies listed in their plans. Moreover, the fact that the Unit is under-staffed and placed within a specific sectoral ministry instead of the Office of the Prime Minister (Department of the Taoiseach) adds to the enforcement and coordination challenges. Addressing the current ineffective governance arrangements and enhancing enforcement capabilities should be seen as crucial.

Sources: Adapted from Coalition 2030's recommendations on the second National Implementation Strategy

3. Climate action as a connector across sectors and scales

With regard to linkages to multilateral agreements and global frameworks for advancing the 2030 Agenda, most attention is focused on climate change. **Fiji** is a case in point, citing the latest scientific assessments to underscore its acute awareness of "the importance of taking proactive measures … to build adaptive capacity and develop strategies that can mitigate the impacts of climate change and other crises."

Several reports offer insights on how global goals are being translated at national and local level. **Chile** expressly states that its Framework Law of Climate Change, "institutionalizes state action," and is directly related to advances in SDG 13 as well as other sectoral adaptation policies and long-term sustainable development strategies. **Canada** employs a climate justice lens by highlighting the creation of "three distinctions-based senior bilateral tables" that support Indigenous Peoples "as full and effective partners in advancing clean growth and addressing climate change goals to reduce emissions based on the recognition of rights, co-operation, and partnership." **Ireland** refers to its recently published Climate Action Plan 2023, through which places climate solutions "at the centre of Ireland's social and economic development," and which provides a framework for progressing "targets under all 17 SDGs."

Poland highlights its promotion of Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans to support comprehensive planning of measures covering transport, environmental protection, healthcare and social and economic development.

Synergies can also be applied from the opposite perspective: failure to achieve targets and lack of progress in one SDG leads to situations where progress in the other SDGs will be lower.
[Voluntary National Review, Lithuania]

The **Central African Republic** acknowledges the contributions of "many NGOs and community associations …in the fight against climate change and the preservation of natural resources," noting these efforts are instrumental in "integrating the challenges of change climate change in all social and productive sectors, which will allow an improvement in the general well-being of its population."

Several countries address the role of carbon markets in generating resources for integrated SDG actions. **Guyana** states its focus on "monetizing" its pristine forests is generating additional revenue streams to fund the transformative projects needed to leap-frog Guyana's development. **Timor-Leste** highlights "significant opportunities" offered by carbon markets to align global climate mitigation efforts and achieve SDGs 13 and 15 in particular. **Romania** highlights its contribution to climate diplomacy, "as a foreign policy priority," notably through the launch of the Climate Diplomacy Network in 2021.

For some countries, climate policies are focused on priority sectors, such as considerations for the energy transition in **Kuwait**, or geothermal exploration for energy security in **St. Kitts and Nevis.**

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4. Achieving the SDGs together: Linkages to other global frameworks

Regarding the integration of global commitments at the national level, most reports highlight actions under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and related Paris Agreement, while a fewer subset of countries mention the Global Biodiversity Framework, Sendai Framework and Addis Ababa. Almost no report – apart from the **EU** and Singapore – mentions alignment to global principles of aid and development effectiveness. The **EUVR** does highlight that its external actions aim to "enhance the positive effects and minimize the negative impacts of EU policies on partner countries, promote synergies between EU policies and so increase development effectiveness." **Singapore** specifies its contribution to climate finance with a reference to its 2018 Climate Action Package "to support fellow developing countries in meeting their Paris Agreement obligations."

Pointing to persistent funding and capacity gaps, the **DRC, Maldives** and **Tanzania**, among other developing countries, underscore the importance of effective international

cooperation. **Tanzania** offers further insights on capacity and financing challenges experienced, including "limited access to finance from within the country and those promised by international agreements, a slow rate of accrediting institutions to facilitate the realization of climate funds, insufficient technology transfer and development, low adaptive capacity, poor information management, and low levels of climate change awareness."

BOX: Why iterative policy making matters – A reflection from the DRC

The DRC report underscores the value of iterative policy making. The report expressly states that despite setting ambitious targets to reduce its emissions by more than 21% by 2030 in its revised Nationally Determined Contributions, this target was not based on a mid-term review or final evaluation of the previous five years that would have enabled the country to accurately identify its emissions reduction, or funding targets. The report admits that the revised NDC, therefore, "was not based on any evidence that could make it possible to conduct the ambitions upwards, as is the case, or downwards."